



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 19:13-30

KEY POINT: Eternal life comes not through works but from following Jesus.

FOR LEADERS

- Winter Sessions: Winter Sessions will take place for 6 weeks beginning this December! This season we will be looking at the call to evangelism for our 6-week study.
• This week's topic: Our passage this week is an important one - specifically because it speaks straight into the heart of what many would consider the major idol of our northern Nj culture - "health, wealth and happiness"

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Communities Video: Watch this week's community extras video!
[2] Icebreaker: What would you say is the most important or valuable possession you have and why?
[3] Opener: How did your own personal study go in the workbook this week? Was there anything that you found particularly eye opening?

WHAT MUST I DO?

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 19: 16-22.

In our passage this week, we open up with Jesus ministering to some children before being approached by a young and very rich ruler who asks Jesus about inheriting eternal life. Far from advocating a righteousness that is somehow based on religious performance or good works, Jesus instead exposes the crucial error behind the rich man's way of thinking.

- [1] In what way(s) does the rich young ruler's words expose the reality of his heart? What error(s) is he making regarding eternal life?
[2] Consider the assumptions that this man has made about Jesus and eternal life; do you feel like this is somewhat similar or different to how most people today view Christianity? How would most non-Christians explain what it means to be a Christian?
[3] Why do you think that people today so often fall into the trap of believing that eternal life is somehow earned through religious works, good deeds, or moral accomplishment? Have you ever fallen into this trap yourself?
[4] Consider that right before this man's question, Jesus is ministering to children. Why do you think Matthew puts these two passages side by side?

In the sermon, Ryan mentioned that the rich man's question of "What good deed must I do?" is essentially the same question at the heart of almost all world religions, though the goal may be swapped for other forms of spiritual fulfillment, such as enlightenment, nirvana or self-realization.

- [5] How does salvation by faith alone in Jesus compare to other world religions of our time?
[6] If you were to ask a random stranger this same question the rich young ruler asks, how do you think they might respond? What about other non-Christians you know who are close to you?

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**Leaders:** *The ruler's question is poorly worded, and exposes the motivation of his heart, but the importance of this question certainly cannot be overstated. At the end of the day, asking the question of "what must I do to inherit eternal life" is probably the most important question we'll ever ask...the problem is that the answer is really "nothing." The truth to the rich young man's question is that there really isn't anything he can do. If we're honest, we can't keep all the commandments, and neither can this man. This is why the news of Jesus is such good news – because Jesus can, and he has. In saying "All these I've done since birth" the rich young ruler isn't just lying to Jesus; he's lying to himself. He probably doesn't even realize the error of his ways, which is why Jesus' response to him is actually very loving.*

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### CAMELS AND NEEDLES

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**Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 19: 23-24.**

As we can see from our passage, the man in this account has two main stumbling blocks in the way of him coming to Christ – his self-righteousness and his wealth. This is exposed when he turns away sad because of his "great possessions" and Jesus comments that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. This harkens back to Jesus' earlier teaching in Matthew 6 where he teaches that we "cannot serve both God and money."

**[7]** In what way can wealth be a stumbling block to entering the Kingdom of God? Why does Jesus say it's so hard for a rich man to enter?

**[8]** Do you think that money or wealth in itself is inherently evil? Explain.

**[9]** Why do you think Jesus so often chooses money and wealth to expose what is in our hearts?

In the sermon, Ryan mentioned that there are ultimately four types of status when it comes to wealth: righteously rich, righteously poor, unrighteously rich and unrighteously poor.

**[10]** What does it mean for us to be righteously rich or poor, and how does that compare to being unrighteously rich or poor?

**[11]** In your opinion, why do you think it is such a step of faith for us to surrender our money to God?

**[12]** What does it look like, practically, to be faithful regardless of our balance statement?

**Ask for a volunteer to read the quote on page 72 of our Study Workbook.**

**Leaders:** *Money is an amoral tool. It is not inherently good or evil, but the way in which we use this tool will immediately reveal the truest motivations of our heart. Think of a brick...it's not good or bad, it just is. However, what I do with this brick will expose who I truly am – whether I throw that brick through a window, or whether I use that brick to lay a foundation for a church, a hospital, a home, etc. The real problem is our sin nature, and the readily available idols of the culture we live in. Realize this – we live in a western culture where, regardless of what we make or where we live, we are among the wealthiest people that have ever lived in all of history. Consider that when you go to the bathroom, you flip a switch and potable water (which much of the world desperately is in need of) carries the refuse away so that you don't have to look at it. That, in and of itself, was wealthy beyond what this rich man could have even imagined. Jesus talks about money (and Hell) more often than anything else in the Bible, which shows not only the importance of these teachings but also how crucial they are for us to hear, understand, and obey. The truth of our reality is that money is a serious idol for almost all of us, and we desperately need to let go of our love of money and grab hold of what it truly valuable in the Kingdom of God. We can't take hold of salvation with our fists clenched.*



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**IN KEEPING COMMANDMENTS**

**Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 19:25-30**

Shocked by Jesus' response to the rich young ruler, the disciples comment on the difficulty of entering God's Kingdom. Jesus explains that with man alone, entering God's Kingdom is impossible, but with God anything is possible.

**[13]** Jesus has made it abundantly clear in this passage that religion, good deeds or works, and keeping commandments will not enter us into the Kingdom, but only faith in Jesus. If that's the case, and we are only saved through faith, then of what value are good works?

**[14]** How should we understand the relationship between salvation by faith in Jesus alone and good works?

**Leaders:** *Read Ephesians 2:8-10 with your group. We are not saved by our works, but only by faith in Christ. But, we are saved TO good works, and this has nothing to do with man, but rather the new life we are given in Christ. Paul explains this further in Galatians 2:20.*

**FOLLOWING JESUS**

**Have your group split up into micro groups of two or three to answer the following questions and then pray with one another to close out your time together:**

**[15]** What have you been challenged to surrender in your own life in order to follow Jesus and what are you being challenged to surrender now?

**[16]** What thing(s) in your life do you personally feel challenged to give up in order to better follow Christ?

**PRAYER**

**[1]** Pray that Jesus would be more valuable to you than anything He would challenge you to surrender.

**[2]** Pray that God would empower and motivate you to use whatever earthly treasures he has entrusted to you for HIS glory and for the good of those who do not yet know him.